



By Harry Maltchayan--The Washington Post

Julia P. Cooper, winner of the Tom C. Clark Award as outstanding federal attorney.

Government Lawyer Cited for Work In Equal Employment Opportunities

By J. Y. Smith
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When Julia P. Cooper, who was born and reared in Fayetteville, N. C., graduated from Howard University law school in 1951, she went to work for the United

States government because it was virtually the only place where she could get a job as an attorney.

"For women and for blacks there was not much opportunity anywhere," she said in an interview. "I remember there were some black women—maybe three or four—who graduated from law school before me, and they were working as secretaries."

But Mrs. Cooper got a job as a lawyer with the old Office of Price Stabilization. In 1953, she moved to the General Services Administration. "I was the first black attorney that GSA had hired," she said. "On the surface, people were nice. There was not any kind of action that was overt or demeaning. But it was lonely."

Today, Mrs. Cooper is the deputy general counsel of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and thus she is a member of Washington's largest "law firm"—the federal government, and her client is The People. Mrs. Cooper's particular concern is fair employment, and her semianonymous toil in behalf of that principle has played a significant role in helping to bring about changes that

have affected the lives of millions of Americans.

What she has done is help bring federal law on fair employment to this point: The only qualification for getting the job is the ability to do it. "That is what the law is," she said. "In reality, artificial standards are imposed and that's where the rub comes. The problem we have now is enforcement."

Last week, the D.C. chapter of the Federal Bar Association took note of Mrs. Cooper's work by conferring on her the Justice Tom C. Clark Award as the year's outstanding federal attorney in the Washington area, where about 6,000 of all 11,000 government lawyers work. Among those who signed the citation and who were present at a presentation ceremony were Chief Justice Warren E. Burger and Attorney General William B. Saxbe.

Mrs. Cooper's citation read, in part:

"You continue to share front ranks in the legal profession with those who are aiding the federal courts with resolution of the novel issues of employment discrimination law. Your accomplishments have come to fruition after dedicated hard

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